phasis). What one needs is not essences, but a definition in terms of observable events, of the term "insight" as used by Thorpe.

A correlate of this method is that Thorpe's treatment of "instinct" is on a high level of abstraction. "It is clear," he writes on page 29, "that 'energy' with *some* degree of specificity, channelled in some way or another, is fundamental to the modern concept of instinct." I suggest that this is just what the modern concept of instinct does *not* require. Philosophers and naturalists have been writing in these or analogous terms for at least 2,500 years, mulling over the same problems again and again without solving any of them.

What are these problems? First, there is the performance of complex, elegantly organized, sequences of behaviour which lead to a specific final state in the animal or to completion of an elaborate structure. Second, there are fluctuations in the readiness to act in specific ways—fluctuations which are often precisely related to bodily need. The distinctively modern treatment of these problems, to which Thorpe himself has contributed much, includes two obvious features. One is the plain description of behaviour, shorn, as far as human frailty allows, of undefined terms, unfounded assumptions and unidentified entities—a ruthless use of that famous Razor. Such description is often applied in experimental conditions: these allow conclusions about the stimuli and circumstances which evoke or inhibit various sorts of behaviour, both stereotyped and variable.

The second is physiological analysis of the causes of behaviour. Thorpe is no enemy of physiology. Indeed, one of the great strengths of his book is that he is glad to accept information of any sort, from any school of research, if it helps to explain behaviour. Nevertheless, on page 19, he writes:

> . . . undesirable as such a term as "nervous energy" may be, it is quite clear that, since innate behaviour is in the main directive and not random, one must either have a directiveness within the drive itself and must accept a wholeheartedly psychological (if not teleological) description of instinctive behaviour; or else one must postulate a system of channels, ducts, conduction paths or some other patterned . . . organization, which could be regarded as self-stimulating within the C.N.S. Once this latter hypothesis is accepted, it is in some respects immaterial whether we conceive of the drive in terms of pressure, potential or what-not.

But if there is a modern, physiological approach to "instinct" or "drive," it is exemplified in actual research on the internal springs of behaviour. Both for some mammals, and for insects such as the blowfly, there are now rudimentary accounts of the causes of the various components of feeding behaviour. These are in rigorous terms, are based on repeatable observations, and require no mention of nervous energy or of channels, ducts or pressure. Again, on the difficult problem of "general drive," Thorpe mentions, in passing, work on "arousal" and its neural basis; but he does not discuss its implications for his theory of motivation.

Most reviewing is unfair. This review is worse even than usual, for I have devoted nearly the whole to the most debatable and difficult parts of Thorpe's thesis. Fortunately, *Learning and Instinct* is assured of success both in this and in subsequent editions. And the discerning reader of these paragraphs will have perceived that Thorpe's book is relentlessly provocative of hard thinking as well as a massive source of factual information. It is really monstrous to ask for more than that.

S. A. BARNETT

SOCIAL STUDIES

Welford, A. T., Argyle, Michael, Glass, D. V. and **Morris, J. N.** (Editors). *Society: Problems and Methods of Study*. London, 1962. Routledge & Kegan Paul. Pp. vi + 586. Price 50s.

FOR A VOLUME of this size it is possible to do little more than list some of the authors and the chapter titles, pick out one or two items for comment and add a few generalizations:

The book is intended for those interested in social studies and social problems who require an outline of the various fields of social studies and a glimpse of current trends. It is organized around recent British thought and research, but, though it has interpreted the concept of Social Studies generously, it has omitted any article on or reference to social anthropology. Sociology is more generously treated.

The book is divided into two parts, the first dealing with Approaches and Methods of Study, and the second with Problems and Applications.

Some of the individual chapters in Part One—notably, Statistical Surveys (Grebenik and Moser) and Experimental Studies of Small Groups (Argyle)—set out, succinctly and clearly, approaches and methods of study. In contrast, the chapter on operational research (Bailey), while giving numerous easily understood examples of the sort of problems that O.R. can tackle, is less clear about how it works or what distinguishes it from other "methods" or "approaches." It is difficult to see why the chapter on Sociology and History (Asa Briggs) was included in this section.

The second part of the book contains four subheadings—Industry, Social Pathology, Population Studies and Problems, and Aspects of Sociology, each part consisting of five or six chapters.

Inevitably, in a symposium of this sort, the quality of individual contributions is rather patchy. Chapters can be picked out that will serve ideally the public for whom the book is intended. Other chapters will prove to be confusing and perhaps confirm the impression that sociology still has a long way to go before it can claim the status of a science. Nancy Seear's chapter on Industrial Research and Cherns's on Industrial Accidents are among those that are models of concise reporting, and the latter raises enough points and gives enough references to stimulate the inquirer to go on with his inquiry. Some chapters, like Douglas's on Reproductive Loss, though excellent in themselves, seem to be curiously specialized in a book that aims to have such general appeal. The special appeal of this particular chapter is, however, likely to satisfy members of the Eugenics Society. Other chapters, on the other hand, are so general and so remote from practical application as to be likely to steer the inquirer away from the subject.

In short, the book is uneven. Its place is within the immediate reach of that student who is himself on the fringe of the subjects covered by the book or who is a specialist in one of them. A glance at the appropriate chapter and he may discover what is being talked and thought and done in the chosen field; what sort of publications were appearing a year or two ago, and what sort of trails he can follow. The editors must have known that they could never completely satisfy anybody. They may feel well satisfied, however, if they have provided a springboard from which many people will be able to discover what is important to them and how to proceed in any chosen direction.

H. G. MAULE

SEX AND SOCIETY

Comfort, Alex. *Sex in Society.* London, 1963. Duckworth. Pp. 172. Price 21s.

THE DUST JACKET of this volume—a fine photograph of Rodin's *Le Baiser*—arouses high hopes. Are we, one wonders, at last to be given a book which treats of sex as not only a biologically based activity of high societal significance, but also as mysteriously both expressing and generating love? As something earthy and lustful, and at the same time tender and protective, arousing and satisfying the senses whilst stimulating the imagination and enriching the emotions? The book that is needed would require an author who was a biologist and a sociologist and a poet: a rare combination indeed. But Dr. Comfort is one of the few who could fill the bill, so one opens the book with high hopes.

The hopes, alas, are not realized. This is not the book we have been waiting for. It lacks the fused precision and passion that is needed; it fails for lack of conviction; it temporizes and compromises; it is, in places, thoroughly pedestrian. Yet it is, in many ways, an excellent book—certainly better than most. The fact that one is disappointed is a reflection of unrealistic initial hopes. The fact that one dared to entertain those hopes is a great compliment to the one contemporary English author who might conceivably have fulfilled them.

With great clarity of social understanding, Dr. Comfort explains the difficulties of any dispassionate study of sex in contemporary Anglo-Saxon society, in a situation where unbiased data are hard to come by, social disapproval always just around the corner, and emotional tension all-pervading. In the absence of facts, he points out, poppycock flourishes—and how true that is! No longer so much the old poppycock about the alleged ill-effects of masturbation, but a progressive-sounding poppycock about sex as a highly spiritual *mystique*. And, the reviewer would add, a good deal of poppycock expressed